

Community Development On-line Master's Program

Guidelines for Creative Component and Thesis Options

General Guidelines

The Community Development On-line Master's Program has a research element in addition to the required number of credit hours. Because of the variety of career and academic opportunities that may result from this degree program, students have considerable leeway in choosing projects that suit their programs of study and also fit their future professional or academic goals. Some universities allow Master's candidates to choose either the creative component or the thesis.

Rationale

When considering whether to write a research thesis or complete a creative component for graduation, students need to consider their professional goals. Students looking for a more research based capstone experience should probably write a thesis paper. On the other hand, those students who will move on to be community practitioners or work in local government, for example, might find the creative component better suited to their intellectual interests and professional goals. The final choice should be made after careful reflection as well as consultation with the Program of Study (POS) committee. No matter which is chosen your Program of Study committee must approve both the choice and the topic. This committee will be made up of your major professors and 2-3 other faculty members who you feel will augment your work. Your major professor must be from your home institution; the other faculty members can be from the other participating institutions, if your home institution and committee approves.

Results

Both the thesis and the creative component require students to present a written proposal to their committee as well as the finished paper or report.

Audience, distribution, and awards

The audience for the thesis is the POS committee and other interested readers with the hope that the thesis might lead to a publication. The audience for the creative component report is also the POS committee. However, the creative component project anticipates an outside audience—whether business, industry, government, non-profit, community organization or academia.

Form

The form of the thesis is that of an academic essay or scholarly research report on original research. The choice will depend on the nature of the thesis, the desires of the POS committee, and the requirements of the Graduate College. For example, a thesis may be close to the form of a scholarly article that would be published in a scholarly journal of the discipline.

The form of the creative component project itself will depend upon the nature of the project. A packet of course materials designed for training, for instance, will take on quite

a different form from a comprehensive grant proposal written to a government agency or a report of an internship or special project.

The creative component report will normally include some rationale for the project, a discussion of methods or procedures, and an explanation of what the student learned from the project. If appropriate, the report might include a literature review, an analysis of why the student did what he or she did, or even a self-evaluation. It may also include an internship experience, with a journal of daily activities and a report that includes an in-depth analysis of the experience.

Original Work

Your thesis or creative component should comprise original work you completed while receiving credit. A thesis may draw upon research you previously conducted in a class, but the final product should be a significant expansion of that research. Your creative component might draw from your experience in previous classes, but it should not be simply a revision of your earlier course work. For example, a research topic might be something discussed or reflected upon in one of your courses, but it should reflect significant development of that earlier work.

Procedures for each option

Research-based thesis (Close collaboration with your major professor is needed throughout a thesis—from the beginning of your research idea to your final defense)

To complete the research-based thesis, you will need to do the following:

- submit a prospectus that includes
 - an explanation of why the central question of the thesis is significant
 - a brief review of relevant literature
 - a timetable or work schedule for completing the thesis
- review the prospectus with the POS committee, revising as necessary so that it becomes a memorandum of understanding between the student and the committee
- amending the literature review, collecting data or information, doing the analysis, writing the analysis, all in close collaboration with the major professor
- submit the thesis
- defend the thesis in an oral examination

Since this is an on-line program, your defense will have to be set up by your committee, and may be completed via teleconference or through internet technology.

Creative component (The procedures are likely to vary more by university than do thesis procedures so it is important to talk with your major professor early)

To complete the creative component, you will need to do the following:

- submit a prospectus that includes

- an explanation of the significance or benefits accruing from the project, to the student and other relevant parties
 - a brief review of relevant literature
 - a timetable or work schedule for completing the project
- review the prospectus with the POS committee, revising as necessary so that it becomes a memorandum of understanding between the student and the committee
- work on the creative project and write the report as required by the Program of Study Committee
- submit the creative component (project and report) to the POS committee
- defend the project in an oral examination

Since this is an on-line program, your defense will have to be set up by your committee, and may be completed via teleconference or through internet technology.